# Table of contents

- Numbers in the News ............................................. 2
- Health Watch ...................................................... 3
- Safety Monitor ...................................................... 4
- Workplace Workshop ............................................ 5
- Science Lab ......................................................... 6
- Creativity .................................................................. 7
- Success & Personal Growth ....................................... 8
- Anecdotes .................................................................. 9
- Manager’s Mentor ................................................... 10
- Family Matters ....................................................... 11
- Grins & Giggles ....................................................... 12
- Money Matters ....................................................... 13
- Odds & Ends ........................................................... 14

---

## June 2020

Published 12 times a year by
Lawrence Ragan Communications, Inc.
10 S. LaSalle St., Ste. 310
Chicago, IL 60603
Phone: 800.878.5331
312.960.4140
Fax: 312.960.4106
Email: cservice@ragan.com
Web: www.firstdraft.biz

Diane Schwartz, CEO
John M. Cowan, editor
johnc@ragan.com
Rob Reinalda, executive editor
Buffy Van Huis, graphic designer

## Web Access

To view this edition online, log on to the *First Draft* website at: [www.firstdraft.biz](http://www.firstdraft.biz).

To get past articles and issues, select the "*First Draft* archives" section.

## Editorial Contact Information

Publicists may contact the editor via email at johnc@ragan.com or via fax at 312.960.4106. Note: *First Draft* does not publish an editorial calendar. Press releases and announcements of new products and services may also be faxed to 312.960.4106 or emailed to johnc@ragan.com.

Submissions of original articles are welcome. Send to johnc@ragan.com, Subject: First Draft submission.

## Subscription Information

Each issue of *First Draft* will arrive six weeks in advance of the featured month. The information is exclusively for your use as a *First Draft* subscriber. You may reprint or otherwise reproduce articles, graphics, cartoons, fillers, statistics, and quotes. It is not necessary to attribute *First Draft* or Lawrence Ragan Communications. All material is ready to drop in to your publication as is. Annual subscription rate is $159 U.S.; $189 international. Write or call 800.878.5331 for multiple subscription rates.

© 2020 Lawrence Ragan Communications, Inc. All rights reserved. ISSN No. 1099-7237
How citizens are practicing social distancing

Americans are following social distancing guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic to slow the spread of the coronavirus, according to a March 27-April 9 survey from Gallup. Since the end of March, 74% of Americans report that they’ve been isolating themselves from people outside their household. Sixty-seven percent of workers, and 84% are nonworkers. Only 4% of workers and 3% of all adults say they’re taking no steps to self-isolate. Here’s how we’re practicing social distancing in the U.S.:

• **Twenty-three percent** of working adults have completely self-isolated, with no contacts outside their household, along with 32% of nonworking adults.

• **Forty-four percent** of workers are mostly isolated and have very little contact with outsiders; 52% of nonworkers do the same.

• **Nineteen percent** of workers are partially isolated with only a little outside contact, along with 13% of nonworkers.

• **Ten percent** of workers say they’re somewhat isolated but still maintain a fair amount of contact with outsiders; only 1% of nonworking adults say the same.

How COVID-19 will change consumer behavior

The coronavirus crisis is likely to change American culture and behavior long after it’s passed. Ad Age points out these trends that are likely to endure:

• **Trust in tried-and-true brands.** The stress of change will coax consumers into sticking with time-tested brands, experts say. Launching anything new will be difficult as Americans shy away from what they’re not already familiar with.

• **Do-it-yourself will stay strong.** We’re already cooking more at home and trying out new recipes, and that’s likely to continue. For example, sales of yeast rose 650% for the week ending March 21, compared with the same period last year, reflecting how many Americans are baking more often.

• **We’ll rely more on digital outlets.** Just as digital streaming is replacing going out to the movies, digital shopping is on the upswing. For example, almost 40% of online grocery shoppers in April made their first online grocery purchase in March.

• **Flexible work is here to stay.** A poll of 500 adults age 40–50 said they expect to go back to their previous routines, including work, school, recreation, and entertainment. However, as working from home has boomed during the pandemic, it’s likely that more employers will offer this option and employees will scoop it up, experts predict.

Consumers tracking virus news, with skepticism

Accurate information is vital to staying healthy and safe during the pandemic. According to the Pew Research Center, 51% of U.S. adults are following news about it very closely, and another 38% say they’re tracking it fairly closely. How are news outlets doing?

Thirty percent feel media companies have been covering the crisis very well; 40% say they’ve been informing people fairly well. But there’s some skepticism: Thirty-seven percent believe news organizations have greatly exaggerated the risks, and 25% feel they’ve exaggerated slightly. Thirty percent feel they’ve gotten their coverage just about right, while 6% feel they’ve not taken it seriously enough, and 2% feel the media isn’t taking it seriously at all.

Consumers are also alert to misinformation. Forty-eight percent say they’ve seen some made-up news about the virus. Still, there’s work to be done. Pew reports that in the course of its surveys, a substantial number of respondents expressed belief in at least one or two false claims about the virus.
Stay healthy while cooped up at home

You're probably worried about staying healthy and safe in self-isolation, no matter how long the pandemic lasts. Here's some advice from the Hackensack Meridian Health website for keeping illness at bay:

- **Maintain a clean environment at home.** Clean and disinfect doorknobs, light switches, remotes, and other surfaces you touch frequently once a day. If you must go out, wash your hands with soap for 20 seconds before and after you leave home.
- **Exercise.** Can't get to the gym? Find a workout video that will get your body moving. Walk around your house or apartment. Try bodyweight exercises like pushups, sit-ups, and wall squats.
- **Stick to a regular meal schedule.** Don't fall victim to the temptation to snack all day long. Eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner at the normal times, and plan healthy meals with lots of fruits and vegetables. Limit takeout food, which is convenient but can be loaded with fats and calories.
- **Stay hydrated.** Drink lots of water. This keeps your body in better shape to fight off infections and diseases. Avoid soda, or replace it with seltzer. Drink a glass of water before every meal to fill your stomach so you won’t overeat.

Focus on mental health while in quarantine

Staying indoors for an extended period—days, weeks, or even months—can be hard, especially when you're already stressed about COVID-19. While staying physically healthy, don’t neglect your mental health. The Verywell Mind website shares these tips:

- **Stick to (or create) routines.** If you're working at home, start the day at your regular time. Shower and dress, and focus on your job. Eat meals at your usual time. If you've got children around, set up a schedule and structure that allows you to care for them in addition to doing your job.
- **Stay active.** Don't sit on the couch all day. Fitness apps can remind you that it's time to get moving. Search YouTube for exercise and yoga videos. Jog through your home a couple of times.
- **Communicate.** Don't cut yourself off from the rest of the world. Spend time with family or friends who are staying with you. Reach out through social media. Take advantage of Skype and Zoom to stay in touch. Even if you're isolated physically, it doesn’t mean you should withdraw entirely.

Hot baths may aid your health

Want to relax during these days of tension and worry about COVID-19? A long, hot bath can relieve your stress—and maybe help your heart.

The Web MD website reports that a study of more than 30,000 adults in Japan found that a nice, steamy soak may reduce one's incidence of high blood pressure and stroke. “We found that frequent tub bathing was significantly associated with a lower risk of hypertension, suggesting that a beneficial effect of tub bathing on risk of [heart disease] may in part be due to a reduced risk of developing hypertension,” said the study’s lead scientist at Osaka University.

After accounting for other factors, the researchers found that taking a daily hot bath was associated with a 28% lower risk of heart disease and a 26% lower risk of stroke, compared with subjects who bathed only once or twice a week.

So relax in the tub, and try to take your mind off your worries. It's good for your body and soul.
Guard against phishing scams during the outbreak

The implications of COVID-19 are scary enough without adding the threat of online fraud or identity theft. However, determined criminals are “phishing” for information by posing as officials of the CDC, as health experts offering cures, and even as your own employer. The Norton website shares these clues that can help you spot a scam and keep your data safe:

• Requests for personal information. Government agencies and legitimate organizations won’t ask for your Social Security number, passwords, or other private details. Don’t turn any of that over.

• Untrustworthy links. You can determine where a link is actually going by hovering your mouse over it and looking at the URL. Many times you’ll be able to tell that it’s not a legitimate online destination. On the other hand, some scammers can create very realistic-looking destination URLs, so be cautious and delete the link in case of any doubt.

• Grammatical mistakes. Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar are telltale clues of a phishing attempt. Again, delete the message immediately.

• Generic greetings. “Dear sir or madam,” or “To whom it may concern,” mean that the sender has no idea who you are.

• Instant action. Phishing scams will insist that you respond immediately. Don’t panic. Just delete the message right away.

Stay safe when meeting virtually

Whether you’re using Zoom, Skype, or some other videoconferencing technology these days, security is essential. You don’t have to be an IT whiz to implement some basic conferencing policies. These come from the Computerworld website:

• Get the right software. Consumer-grade software usually doesn’t have all the administrative tools you need to keep meetings secure. Look for tools created for professional use, and update them regularly.

• Use the waiting room. A waiting room allows the meeting administrator to confirm that only authorized people can join the meeting.

• Enable password protection. Whichever service you use, it should provide a meeting ID number and a separate password or PIN. If you create your own password, use a password generator to avoid something easy to guess.

• Keep links private. Don’t share invitations or links via social media—only through your organization’s email system.

• Lock the meeting. Once everyone has signed in, lock your meeting down to prevent any unauthorized users from trying to hack in. Of course, some people may drop out temporarily. Let them back in, but be sure to relock once they return.

• Don’t record meetings unless necessary. If you must record, make sure every participant is aware of it.

• Educate hosts. If employees are planning their own meetings, be sure they’re aware of the proper procedures for holding a secure conference.
Workplace Workshop

Follow this videoconference etiquette

As more and more people shift to working from home, videoconferencing via Skype, Zoom, and other platforms has become essential to staying in touch with co-workers and managers. But you have to behave appropriately. The Owl Labs website offers these video conferencing etiquette tips:

• **Be on time.** Like any meeting, videoconferencing calls for punctuality. Dialing in late is a distraction to your punctual colleagues. Make sure you know how to connect more than two minutes before the meeting begins.

• **Mute yourself when you’re not speaking.** Your microphone can easily pick up stray noises in the background—chewing, phones ringing, dogs barking, kids shouting, and the like. Do everyone a favor and stay on mute until you have something to say.

• **Check your technology.** Do a few test runs so you can be sure you know what you’re doing. You don’t want a sudden glitch to take you out of the meeting unexpectedly or disrupt it.

• **Dress appropriately.** You may spend your current workday in your pajamas, but dress up before logging on. You may not have to wear a suit and a necktie, but you want to project a professional image online.

• **Get in the right position.** Make sure your face is visible, and avoid angles that show people just your ears or nostrils. Face the camera directly, not from above or below. A stable stack of books can elevate your computer as needed. Look directly into the camera when speaking, not at others in the conference.

• **Check your lighting.** Don’t place bright lights directly behind you, or you’ll blind other participants. Make sure the light is adequate so you don’t appear to be speaking from darkness or shadows.

• **Pay attention.** Don’t multitask by checking emails or doing other work during the conference. It’s disrespectful to others. Plus, you might miss something important or delay in answering a question directed to you.

Working from home? Stay productive and sane

Working from home isn’t new—people have telecommuting at least part-time for years—but it has an added urgency as the world deals with the impact of COVID-19. Here’s how to stay productive and sane when your home is now your workplace:

• **Get dressed.** Yes, you could work in your pajamas, but showering and getting dressed, even informally, puts you in the mood to start work for the day.

• **Designate a specific workspace.** Don’t just slouch on the sofa with your laptop. Find a specific spot to set up shop, whether you’ve got a spare room or just a corner of your bedroom. This helps you stay organized and focused, and it reduces distractions and the temptation to goof off or snack incessantly.

• **Stick to firm working hours.** Start at the same time every day, take breaks, and finish up at a reasonable hour. Don’t work into the night just because you can—teach yourself to leave tomorrow’s work for tomorrow to avoid exhaustion and burnout.

• **Don’t let the news distract you.** There’s lot to watch and listen to, but a steady drumbeat of bad news can take a toll on your mental health. Listen to uplifting music or inspirational podcasts instead. Stay informed, but don’t obsess.
Science is fun. Science is curiosity. We all have natural curiosity. Science is a process of investigating. It’s posing questions and coming up with a method. It’s delving in. —Sally Ride

There is a single light of science, and to brighten it anywhere is to brighten it everywhere. —Isaac Asimov

**Seismic noise drops in wake of worldwide lockdowns**

COVID-19 has made an impact on people all over the world, but curiously, it’s reduced their impact on the planet. *The New York Times* reports that self-quarantining has had an observable effect on seismic activity beneath city streets.

Thomas Lecocq, a seismologist at the Royal Observatory of Belgium in Brussels, measured the seismic noise beneath the city after Brussels established a lockdown in mid-March. He found that it had diminished quickly and significantly once Belgians and their cars were off the streets.

Other scientists around the world have followed his lead and detected similar declines. In Great Britain, one seismologist tracking activity from her suburban house observed a 20–25% reduction in average weekly noise one week after the British commenced their lockdown. In the center of London, another seismometer recorded a 30% drop. Similarly, noise levels in Los Angeles have declined more than 50% of normal, and the Paris Institute of Earth Physics has detected a 38% drop in average daytime seismic noise in the city.

All our footsteps have more an impact than we realized.

**Thousands volunteer for space missions**

Feel like getting off the world for a while? You’ve got company. As the *U.S. News & World Report* states, some 12,000 people have applied to become astronauts following a call from NASA for volunteers. It’s the second-largest group of would-be spacefarers in the agency’s history.

The hopefuls come from all 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia and four U.S. territories. Those selected will probably travel to the International Space Station and pave the way for exploration of the moon and Mars.

The previous call for recruits drew a record 18,300 candidates, of which 12 were ultimately chosen. This time around NASA tightened its qualifications, requiring a master’s degree in science, technology, engineering, or math. The current active astronaut corps numbers 48.

**Ghost ship mystery solved**

Every 20 years or so, the remains of a 50-foot shipwreck are exposed on a Maine beach in the wake of strong storms, only to be buried again by more harsh weather. It’s a mystery that has frustrated locals wanting to know more about the ghost ship.

According to the CNN website, the ship was first spotted in 1958, then reappeared in 1978, 2007, 2013, and 2018. Some pieces of the ship were saved, and now the mystery has been cleared up.

A marine archeologist sent pieces of the wreck to the Cornell University Tree-Ring Laboratory. There, the timber was matched in a tree-ring index to a probable date of 1753. With that data, the archeologist studied historical records and linked it to a sloop called Defiance, built in 1754 and wrecked near the Maine location in 1769.

Defiance sailed out of Salem, Massachusetts, with a cargo of flour, pork, and other goods. Crewed by four men, Defiance hit a fierce storm and was forced onto the beach. Although the sloop was a total loss, all four men survived.

The identification is significant because Defiance is one of the few examples of a pre-Revolutionary War ship built in New England. Scientists also hope to use the information to measure the impact of sea level rise and storm activity.
Creativity

The most talented, thought-provoking, game-changing people are never normal.
—Richard Branson

Great things are not accomplished by those who yield to trends and fads and popular opinion.
—Jack Kerouac

Coronavirus spurs creative solutions

The COVID-19 pandemic is scary, but if it has any upside, it’s in the way the crisis has sparked innovation and creativity in business.

The BBC website reports that the Washington, D.C., public library hosts a virtual book club for readers, and chef Massimo Bottura of Italy has launched an Instagram series to teach basic recipes to homebound cooks. An art teacher in Tennessee is livestreaming classes for children who want to be creative.

Speaking of art, museums such as the Louvre in Paris have been offering virtual tours, and art lovers can view classic sculptures from the Vatican.

Small-business owners are thinking outside the box and taking steps to address the crisis, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce website reports. Cycling apparel company Kitsbow in North Carolina has shifted from making jerseys to manufacturing personal protective equipment (PPE), and it plans to produce 26,000 face shields and face masks. Similarly, Sweaty Bands, a maker of no-slip headbands for activewear, is repurposing materials into facemasks for local hospitals.

On another front, cosmetics maker Garb2Art has found a new market for a hand sanitizer it developed three years ago. Revamping the production process, the company has expanded its staff from five people to 25 and recouped its $25,000 investment in bottles and alcohol in a single day.

Keep kids creative under lockdown

Children at home during the COVID-19 crisis are always looking for something to do. The Lifelong Kindergarten group at the MIT Media Lab has identified some guiding principles for cultivating creativity that can be adapted to life under lockdown:

• **Projects.** Assign kids projects using everyday household materials—Legos, building blocks, Play-Doh, paper and pens, and more. Challenge them to build a tower of the future or draw a picture of what life will look like once they can go outside again.

• **Passion.** Make sure your suggested projects tap into children’s interests. Encourage them to develop their own ideas for projects that will use their talents and hold their attention.

• **Peers.** Creativity flourishes with help from others. Even if they can’t visit, kids can use Skype and Zoom to interact with their friends, cooperate, and support each other as they explore their mutual interests.

Unlock innovation with these tactics

Want to boost your creativity? It can enhance your career and your life. The Forbes website offers these techniques for jumpstarting your brain:

• **Say yes.** Don’t shut down ideas too quickly. Even if they seem unrealistic or impractical, take a positive approach by saying, “Yes, and _____.” Ask follow-up questions to spur a deeper exploration of the issues. You may discover a way to bring a seemingly impossible idea to life.

• **Brainstorm on a large scale.** It’s easy to limit your thinking, especially when resources are scarce. Don’t fall into that trap. Expand on your idea without worrying about how much it will cost or how much work it will take. It’s always possible to scale it down later, but in the long run you’ll generate more impressive plans and strategies.

• **Look for the pain points.** Find out what’s bothering your partners or customers. Chances are you can come up with interesting ideas for solving their most pressing problems. To cite one well-known example, an entrepreneur created Netflix, which initially shipped DVDs to homes for as long as customers wanted to keep them, because he realized people didn’t like late fees. Removing that one pain point led to a mammoth business.
Success means doing the best we can with what we have. Success is the doing, not the getting; in the trying, not the triumph. Success is a personal standard, reaching for the highest that is in us, becoming all that we can be.

—Zig Ziglar

Success does not consist in never making mistakes but in never making the same one a second time.

—George Bernard Shaw

Support local business success during the crisis

Your favorite small businesses—the neighborhood bookstore, the family-owned coffee shop, your local grocery store—are struggling to stay afloat during the COVID-19 crisis. The CNN website shares these suggestions for making sure they succeed:

• **Buy gift cards.** Most businesses, even small, local ones, have gift cards for sale. Buying a few puts money in their bank accounts right away, even if you (or the friends you give them to) don’t use them right away.

• **Shop locally.** Even if you can’t walk down the block to the store, you can often order merchandise online. Check their websites for opportunities to buy what you need online instead of heading to Amazon or other internet giants.

• **Look for discounts.** Businesses trying to attract customers when business is bad frequently offer discounts to entice consumers. Taking advantages of these discounts will help support them while helping you to stay within your budget.

• **Order in.** Your local restaurant might be closed for dining on site, but many are still delivering food. You can protect yourself and the delivery person by ordering over the phone, using a credit card, and including the tip on the card to limit physical interaction.

• **Tip generously.** Your tip may or may not directly benefit the store, but it will show your appreciation to drivers and staff, which can result in higher morale and better retention, which businesses need now more than ever.

Some businesses thrive in these troubled times

Many businesses are encountering challenges amid the COVID-19 pandemic, but a few industries are seeing sales rise. The Criteo website reports that these sectors are apparently thriving during the lockdown:

• **Webcams.** Naturally, people are buying webcams in order to Skype and Zoom with friends, relatives, co-workers, and more. In early April, sales of webcams in the United States jumped 458% in a one-week period.

• **Sleepwear and loungewear.** When people aren’t going out, they’re likely to wear comfy clothes all day around the house. In Australia, for example, such sales soared 184%

• **Shaving and grooming equipment.** Can’t get to the barbershop or hair salon? No problem. Around the world people are ordering shavers and other cosmetic gear to manage their hair and appearance.

• **Pet supplies.** Pet adoption rates are climbing in the U.S. as people seek companionship at home, leading to a 274% surge of sales of pet food, bedding, cages, and treats.

• **Baking items.** What could be better when you’re stuck at home than baking something tasty? Google Trends reports that searches for “banana bread” skyrocketed 54% around the world during March. Items purchased online include batter and cocoa mixes, breadcrumbs, pie and pastry fillings, and cookie decorating kits.

• **Gaming equipment.** You can go virtual to get out of your home. Video game use rose 75% in the U.S. one week after the World Health Organization declared the outbreak a pandemic. Purchases of consoles, controllers, and other gaming hardware went up 338% in early April.

• **Outdoor furniture.** If you’re fortunate enough to have a balcony, back yard, deck, or porch, you probably want some comfortable furniture to relax on while you’re social distancing from your neighbors. Folding chairs, stools, outdoor tables, and more shot up 428%.

• **Exercise bands.** These stretchy pieces of rubber used for muscle resistance training in confined spaces are a useful substitute for heading out to the gym. Sales have gone up 86% since stay-at-home guidelines have been in place.
Anecdotes

Finding hope to carry on

Rob’s girlfriend had left him, he’d lost his job, his parents had died, and he felt a hopelessness that made living feel unbearable.

He found an online forum focused on free counseling, and he asked the members, “Why can’t I kill myself?” The No. 1 answer focused on the fact that he must have hope somewhere inside of him that was keeping him around.

Rob thought about it but couldn’t figure it out. The next day he went back to the forum and said he didn’t have any hope inside him. One member replied, “You are too focused on your grief to find the hope. Before you go to bed, try asking to find your hope in a dream. You should find your answers if you ask for them.”

As Rob went to sleep that night, he decided to try it out.

In his dream, Rob was standing on a sidewalk. A stranger walked toward him and put a slip of paper into Rob’s hand. The writing was fuzzy at first, but then it cleared up and he saw the words, “Life is an adventure.”

As the stranger started walking away, Rob yelled, “I love you!” The stranger turned and smiled and said, “I love you too, Rob,” and then disappeared into thin air.

Rob woke up and felt a renewed sense of hope. The dream he had felt intense and real. His hopelessness had disappeared, and Rob suddenly realized that he was holding on to the hope that this life was an adventure full of both negative and positive chapters. He realized although there were bad experiences, there could also be positive experiences in his future, and he suddenly felt an overwhelming hope that there would be.

He started looking for a new job. He stopped focusing on the loss of his girlfriend and opened himself up to the idea of finding someone new to love. And he looked back fondly on the moments he had with his parents, knowing that they were an important part of this adventure he was taking on. He had found the courage to live.

The patient mother

A woman walked in the grocery store with a three-year-old girl in the seat of her shopping cart. As they passed the cookie section, the little girl asked for cookies, and her mother told her no.

The little girl immediately began to whine and fuss. The mother said quietly, “Now, Monica, we just have half of the aisles left to go through; don’t be upset. It won’t be long.”

Soon they came to the candy aisle, and the little girl began to beg for candy. When her mother said she couldn’t have any, the little girl began to cry. The mother said, “There, there, Monica—only two more aisles to go, and then we’ll be checking out.”

When they got to the checkout, the little girl immediately started clamoring for gum, and she threw a loud tantrum when her mother refused. The mother patiently said, “Monica, we’ll be through this checkout lane in five minutes, and then you can go home and have a nice nap.”

A man followed them out to the parking lot and stopped the woman. “I couldn’t help noticing how patient you were with little Monica,” he said.

The mother laughed. “My little girl’s name is Tammy. I’m Monica.”
Manager’s Mentor

Tips for working with telecommuters

Working remotely has become the norm for many employees as COVID-19 remains a threat. It’s convenient and even vital in many industries, but the lack of direct interaction—ease of access, on-site collaboration—can create unease and confusion. Follow this guidance:

- **Hold more meaningful video meetings.** Schedule regular one-on-one video calls at least weekly to keep connections strong, but don’t limit video calls to business. At the beginning of every call, catch up on remote workers’ personal lives, so they feel less like contractors and more like valued team members. No need to pry; just stay up to date at an office-appropriate level. Do the same for full-team meetings.

- **Keep communication clear and consistent.** Pay close attention to IMs and emails from telecommuters. They will call when something is urgent, but they shouldn’t have to wait 24 hours to get answers to their shorter questions.

- **Don’t overload them.** Communication with remote employees can present a Goldilocks problem. Too little makes employees feel frustrated and unappreciated. Too much can make them feel untrusted. However, the “just right” amount makes employees feel supported, not smothered. Ask employees how much communication they like, and then work together to find a system that works for both sides.

How to manage during the pandemic

Managing employees when many or all of them are working at home has unique challenges. Here’s how to keep things moving smoothly:

- **Track your KPIs.** You and your employees should understand the results they’re responsible for. Establish clear key performance indicators to keep everyone on the same page.

- **Embrace flexibility.** During these turbulent times, employees are juggling additional responsibilities and experiencing greater stress—just as you probably are. Be tolerant. Delays will happen, but most won’t be catastrophic. Cut your employees—and yourself—some slack.

- **Communicate often.** Stay in touch as much as you can without overwhelming employees with emails, phone calls, and online meetings. Let them know what’s going on in your organization, and respond to their questions and concerns as promptly and honestly as you can.

Managing essential workers through the crisis

Not every employee can work from home during the COVID-19 outbreak. If your organization provides “essential services” requiring employees to show up on site, take these steps from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce for keeping things running smoothly:

- **Enforce hygiene practices.** Check your policies on sanitation and hygiene, and update them if necessary. Make sure employees know how to stay safe and avoid infecting others. Provide gloves, masks, and hand sanitizer to everyone.

- **Support social distancing.** Remind employees to stay at least six feet from each other as much as possible, and to avoid physical contact. Limit business travel.

- **Expand sick leave.** Stricken employees will need more time to self-isolate and recover from an infection. Offer generous sick leave for their own protection and that of your customers.

- **Communicate with customers.** Let customers know what you’re doing to keep them and your employees safe. Update them on any changes in operating hours, policies, and other factors that might affect their interaction with you.

- **Be ready to close and clean.** If someone in your workplace comes down with the virus, be prepared to close for at least a day so it can be thoroughly disinfected.
Family Matters

Keep your family healthy during COVID-19

Every parent wants to keep his or her family healthy, especially these days. The Times Square Chronicles website shares this essential advice for maintaining a healthy household:

- **Adopt an active lifestyle.** Exercise is important for good health at all ages. As much as possible, take walks and bike rides, or at least work out indoors with some simple exercises on a regular basis.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** Avoid fast food and processed meats. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, and stay away from foods with added salt and sugar. Make large meals so you can freeze leftovers for days when you don’t feel like cooking.
- **Spend time together.** Mental health is as important as physical well-being. Spending time as a family encourages open communication and emotional bonding—both vital to forging a strong family unit.

Keep the kids occupied while you’re working at home

You’re working from home, but your kids are now underfoot all day because schools are closed. How to keep them occupied so you don’t drive each other crazy? Try these activities:

- **Build a fort.** Encourage the kids to build a fort using sheets, blankets, pillows, and boxes.
- **Watch the whales.** The Georgia Aquarium has a beluga whale webcam, allowing people to view its whales any time. (The Louvre in Paris also offers a virtual tour of its famous artwork.)
- **Bake.** Take a break from work, and enlist your children in baking cookies, brownies, cakes, and more. They’ll be motivated by knowing they’ll be able to eat the result.
- **Have an indoor picnic.** Eat lunch on the living room floor with a blanket and picnic food.
- **Check out reading videos.** Celebrities like Josh Gad and LeVar Burton, along with astronauts on the International Space Station, are reading stories to children online.
- **Read a book together.** Have older children read one chapter of a book every day, then discuss it at dinner. Encourage them to predict what’s coming next.
- **Clean up.** This may take a little bribery, but with everyone at home, clutter can compound faster than you realize. Recruit kids to vacuum, wash floors, clean bathrooms, and the like.
- **Play games.** Get out your board games, jigsaw puzzles, chess sets and checkerboards, and other types of time-filling games.
- **Write in a journal.** Your kids can record what they’ve done each day, how they feel about being isolated, what they want to do when stay-at-home orders are lifted, and more.

Teaching kids at home amid the outbreak

Kids don’t have to miss out on their education just because the schools are closed during the COVID-19 outbreak. You can keep them learning at home while you work at home, following this advice from the San Antonio Express-News website:

- **Don’t try to replicate everything.** It’s impossible to re-create the school day your children are used to. Be flexible. When kids get antsy, allow them breaks to relax and play.
- **Balance.** Provide activities children can do on their own so you have time to get some work done and relax.
- **Create a routine.** Get kids up and dressed the same time every weekday. Let them play and exercise for a while, then launch into lessons before lunch. If they complete everything before lunch, fine. If not, encourage them to finish everything before their midafternoon snack.
- **Give kids some freedom.** Don’t try to dictate their every move. Let kids choose what tasks they want to do first and what kind of rewards they get for completing their lessons. This makes the routine easier to handle.
Grins & Giggles

Smarter than you thought

At the bar, Joe made a bet with the man sitting next to him, Bill.

Joe said, “Hey, idiot, every question I ask you that you don’t know the answer, you have to give me five dollars. And if you ask me a question and I can’t answer yours, I will give you $100.”

Bill shrugged. “OK.”

Joe asked, “How many continents are there in the world?”

Bill wasn’t all that smart, so he didn’t know. He handed over a five-dollar bill. Then Bill said, “Now you tell me: What animal stands with four legs but sleeps with three?”

Joe thought long and hard, but in the end he gave up and handed over the $100. Then he said, “By the way, what was the answer to your question?”

Bill shrugged and handed over five dollars.

A few one-liners

Funny or dumb? You decide:

• What’s the best thing about Switzerland? I don’t know, but the flag is a huge plus.
• I submitted 10 puns to a joke-writing competition to see if any of them made the finals. Sadly, no pun in ten did.
• What’s the difference between a hippo and a Zippo? One is really heavy, and the other is a little lighter.
• Can a kangaroo jump higher than the Empire State Building? Of course! The Empire State Building can’t jump.
• If you ever get cold, stand in the corner of a room. They’re usually 90 degrees.
• If you have 10 apples in one hand and 14 oranges in the other, what do you have? Really, really big hands.
• I took part in the suntanning Olympics, but I only got bronze.
• What do Alexander the Great and Winnie-the-Pooh have in common? Same middle name.
• Murphy’s Law says that anything that can go wrong will go wrong. Cole’s Law is thinly sliced cabbage.
• Not only is my new thesaurus terrible, it’s also terrible.

Elephants never forget

An elephant drinking from a stream spotted a tortoise lounging on the shore. He grabbed it with his trunk and flung it into the jungle.

A passing zebra asked, “Why did you do that?”

“Forty years ago, that tortoise nipped my tail just for fun,” the elephant said.

“Wow, 40 years ago! How did you remember that?”

“I have turtle recall,” replied the elephant.

A miracle?

Sister Mary was a devoutly religious woman. Besides her duties as a nun, she was very active in various hospitals visiting sick patients and taking care of all their needs.

One day she found her car was out of gas in the hospital parking lot, and the only container she could find to put any gas into was a bedpan.

Sister Mary walked two blocks to the closest gas station, filled up the bedpan with gas, and headed back to her car.

As Sister Mary started tipping the gas into the fuel tank, a man walked out of the hospital. He stopped and watched her. Just when she finished pouring in the last drops of gas, he said, “I promise, if that car starts, I’m going to church this Sunday!”
Money Matters

FBI warning on COVID-19 scams

The COVID-19 outbreak and its impact on the economy are giving crooks the opportunity to take advantage of widespread fear and uncertainty. The FBI is warning against “money mule” scams, in which fraudsters enlist innocent people into moving money around for laundering purposes. Specifically, the bureau advises you to watch out for two common schemes:

Work-from-home scams. These promise lots of money for little to no effort. Red flags include:
- The “employer” you communicate with uses web-based email platforms such as Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail, Outlook, etc.
- You are asked to receive funds in your personal bank account and then “process” or “transfer” funds via wire transfer, ACH, mail, or money service businesses, such as Western Union or MoneyGram.
- You are asked to open bank accounts in your name for a business.
- You are told to keep a portion of the money you transfer, which could expose you to criminal charges.

Overseas individuals. Watch out for emails, private messages, and phone calls from individuals you do not know who claim to be located abroad and in need of your financial support. Criminals are trying to gain access to U.S. bank accounts to move fraud proceeds from you and other victims to their bank accounts. Common scenarios include individuals who claim they are:
- U.S. service members stationed overseas asking you to send or receive money on behalf of themselves or a loved one battling COVID-19.
- U.S. citizens working abroad asking you to send or receive money on behalf of themselves or a loved one battling COVID-19.
- U.S. citizens quarantined abroad asking you to send or receive money on behalf of themselves or a loved one battling COVID-19.
- People working in the medical equipment business asking you to send or receive money on their behalf.
- Affiliates of a charitable organization asking you to send or receive money on their behalf.

Expert financial advice for staying solvent

The pandemic isn’t just a health threat; it’s also an economic one. Finance expert Suze Orman shares tips on keeping your finances under control on the Yahoo Finance website:
- Put bills on hold. Some mortgage lenders are giving homeowners a break on payments, and many states and communities are prohibiting evictions over nonpayment of rent. Citizens with student loans can withhold payment for two months. Talk to your creditors to see what they can do for you.
- Don’t sell stocks in a panic. Yes, the stock market is down severely right now. If you have your savings there, you might be tempted to get out before things get worse. Orman advises staying the course as much as you can. In time, the market will rise again. Keep investing if possible.
- Beef up your emergency fund. Most experts advise saving enough money for three months of bills. Try to expand that. Chances are this crisis will last a long time, and if you’re laid off or furloughed, three months may not be enough to tide you over.
- Be reasonable with purchases. Put off buying that new smartphone or major appliance unless you absolutely have to. Conserve water and electricity as much as possible. And don’t go overboard with online shopping if you’re cooped up at home. It’s all too easy to click “buy” on something you don’t really need.
Fun facts about your Father’s Day gift

Father’s Day is June 20 this year, and the 65 million fathers in the United States (give or take a few million) will bask in familial attention and be showered with gifts—mostly neckties.

The modern necktie evolved from the small, knotted neckerchiefs worn by Croatian mercenaries working for the French in the Thirty Years’ War. The word cravat derives from a combination of the French “Croate” and the Croatians’ own name for themselves, “Hrvati.”

With the rise of the business class in the 19th century, demand grew for neckwear that was durable, comfortable, and easy to tie.

In 1926, a New York tie maker named Jesse Langsdorf developed a technique that improved the tie’s elasticity, which allowed it to revert more easily to its original shape. The “Langsdorf” became the most popular form of necktie.

Since then, ties have widened as far as 4.5 inches and thinned to three inches (or skinnier) depending on the current style, but they seem to be here to stay.

The quarantine, as F. Scott Fitzgerald (might have) described it

You might be stuck at home, but you’re probably not doing it as well as F. Scott Fitzgerald did—or might have done. Here’s a letter purportedly written by the famous author in 1920, quarantined in the south of France:

Dearest Rosemary,

It was a limpid dreary day, hung as in a basket from a single dull star. I thank you for your letter. Outside, I perceive what may be a collection of fallen leaves tussling against a trash can. It rings like jazz to my ears. The streets are that empty. It seems as though the bulk of the city has retreated to their quarters, rightfully so. At this time, it seems very poignant to avoid all public spaces. Even the bars, as I told Hemingway, but to that he punched me in the stomach, to which I asked if he had washed his hands. He hadn’t. He is much the denier, that one. Why, he considers the virus to be just influenza. I’m curious of his sources.

The officials have alerted us to ensure we have a month’s worth of necessities. Zelda and I have stocked up on red wine, whiskey, rum, vermouth, absinthe, white wine, sherry, gin, and lord, if we need it, brandy. Please pray for us.

You should see the square, oh, it is terrible. I weep for the damned eventualities this future brings. The long afternoons rolling forward slowly on the ever-slick bottomless highball. Z. says it’s no excuse to drink, but I just can’t seem to steady my hand. In the distance, from my brooding perch, the shoreline is cloaked in a dull haze where I can discern an unremitting penance that has been heading this way for a long, long while. And yet, amongst the cracked cloudline of an evening’s cast, I focus on a single strain of light, calling me forth to believe in a better morrow.

Faithfully yours,
F. Scott Fitzgerald

Except it’s actually a parody written for McSweeney’s by Nick Fariella in 2020. Still, it evokes what many of us are feeling these days as we grapple with life. Here’s hoping all of you are safe and well.